

The Legend of the King's Sword

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Allow me to read you a story about the Legend of the King's Sword. It is found in my biography on Asahel Nettleton. Here now is the Legend of the King's Sword:

There was a legend about a magical sword used by an old English king. It seems that whenever the king used this particular sword, he experienced success and victory on the battlefield. His enemies learned to fear the king's sword. Eventually, the king grew old and feeble and an adversary of the king began to spread a rumor around the village that the king's sword no longer possessed supernatural powers, that it was now just an average ordinary sword of little use to its owner. This story began to spread among the peasants until the entire village believed that the king's sword was now impotent.

As the king's heir to the throne matured, he too grew up believing the story about the sword's uselessness and ordered the royal blacksmith to forge him a new sword. A handsome, shiny, engraved sword with jewels much more beautiful to behold than his father's old sword. This was done. One day, an enemy force attacked the castle village and fell upon the inhabitants killing and maiming many. The enemy then laid siege to the castle. The young prince grabbed his new bejeweled sword and went forth to defend his kingdom but to no avail. Rather than defeating his enemy, he was captured. In fact, the entire village of the royal family was now under bondage to this evil enemy.

Time passed and the villagers groaned beneath the oppressive bondage of the evil power. But there was nothing they could do but suffer. Eventually, the old king died and his son, the prince, could not assume the throne because he was still a captive of this evil entity. The entire village groaned and lamented as they served their oppressive and evil new ruler.

During this time, a nephew of the king grew to maturity and one day this lad called on the prince of the castle. The guards allowed the fair-haired harmless looking youth entry since he was royalty. The prince was held captive in a chamber with a guard at the door. When the lad was allowed to visit the prince, he asked him where the old sword was that once belonged to the king. The prince pointed to a large cedar chest by the barred window. The chest was opened and there, wrapped in an old blanket, was the leather scabbard which held the king's sword. The lad asked if he could have the sword as a

memento of his uncle the king. The prince nodded yes, telling the lad that it was just an old worthless sword of little use today.

The lad left the castle with the sword wrapped in the old blanket. Upon arriving at his part of the village, he stopped by the barber shop to get a haircut. The barber was one of the ancient men of the town. As the old barber cut the lad's locks, he inquired about the bundle by the lad's feet. The lad told the barber about the sword. When the old man heard this, his eyes lit up and his stooped shoulders straightened. He then proceeded to tell the lad about all the powers that the sword formerly possessed. The lad was curious and as he left the barber shop, he visited an old baker. He asked the elderly baker to verify the story of the magical sword. "Oh yes," said the baker, "I was an eye witness to the king's victories with that sword for I used to be the royal baker until the enemy captured the castle and placed us all in bondage." The baker turned away. His eyes were full of sadness.

The lad left the baker and went home. In his little hovel, he unwrapped the blanket and pulled the old sword from the worn leather scabbard. Though it was large and double-edged, the sword seemed just an ordinary sword. In fact, it was almost too heavy to wield properly. The lad lay down on a mat on the straw floor and fell asleep next to the sword. The lad dreamed of being a king. He dreamed he was king and fighting a battle with the sword. The enemy fled from the lad in fear. Was it the magical sword?

He awoke to sunlight pouring in from a hole in his thatched roof. The lad grabbed the sword. Lifting it up with both hands, he exclaimed, "It must be true." With a new faith, he rushed from his hovel and the first enemy soldier he encountered, he brandished the sword and attacked. The enemy fell down dead. Soon, another enemy was upon the lad but brandishing the sword again, he experienced victory. Finally, a troop of enemies fell upon the lad but the sword saved him once more. There were now eye witnesses to these events and soon word spread among the villagers that the king's old sword was once again magical.

Word got to the evil ruler at the castle and he personally led his largest band of soldiers to go out and attack the lad. All the lad had to do was to brandish the sword and the enemy fell before him. The lad was a hero. He and the sword set the captives free. The lad was made the new king. The prince was so bewildered and jealous that he killed himself by falling upon his bejeweled sword. From that day on, there was peace in the valley of the king.

Listen friends, the church has failed with its new swords and methodologies. It is time to seek the old paths once again. In the Book of Jeremiah, we read, "Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls." The old paths have weapons that have proven themselves to be mighty weapons against the dark kingdoms of this world. These weapons were used in olden days by men like Jonathan Edwards and George Whitfield, Asahel Nettleton and Charles Spurgeon. What were these weapons so mightily used in

revival and spiritual awakenings? They are the sword of the Spirit and the great doctrines of the Gospel.

These men were mighty men because they were anointed with the Spirit of God and they preached doctrinally sound sermons which drove the truth of God into the very heart and conscience of man. Their sword was one of total depravity and utter ruin for mankind that man was a rebel against a most high God, that man was a guilty sinner who deserved the punishments of an eternal hell and the only way to be reconciled back to a holy God, was found at the foot of a bloody cross, that the law of God was severe and strict and all mankind would be judged against the utter strictness and severity of the law of God. All men would fail that test because all of mankind are sinners who need a sin substitute in the person of Jesus Christ. The sword of repentance was greatly used by these men. It cut down its hearers and then made them tremble before a just and holy God, that it was man's duty to exercise repentance towards God and faith in Jesus Christ and if he failed to do that, he was justly condemned to a burning hell for all eternity because man by his very nature is an enemy of God. God is ready to cut a wicked sinner down with the sword of justice and man's only hope is in the merit of Christ Jesus.

George Whitfield's great cry was, "Ye must be born again," and he shook two continents for God. The great doctrine of regeneration has fallen into disuse and this particular sword is a mighty one if wielded properly.

Listen friends, men like Edwards and Whitfield knew how to tread the old paths. They knew full well that a sinner had to be awakened before he could be converted and their preaching was aimed at the very heart and conscience to awaken men to their lost and ruined condition and then show them the remedy for sin through the shed blood of the Son of God who rose again from the dead and who now reigns in glory.

But sadly, many in our churches today know little about these great doctrines for they have been seldom preached in our land in former years. And if they've been preached, they have lacked the necessary power attended to them which is the Spirit of God in an anointed ministry. Few men in the pulpit today understand what is meant by an anointed ministry. Fewer still actually possess it. Most preachers get by with their education and personality but in the Gospel of Luke, John the Baptist declares, "I indeed baptize you with water but one mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose. He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire."

Too many pulpits today lack fire. They lack power which comes from an anointed ministry under the control of the Holy Spirit. But mighty men of past days, like Edwards and Whitfield and Spurgeon and Nettleton, knew they could not preach without this fire. No, they did not speak in tongues, but when they preached, strong men were melted down under the influence of a holy God. When these men preached up the great doctrines of the Gospel, men were struck in their conscience as if a sword had just cut them down. They wielded these great doctrines with the strong arm of the Almighty in attendance to the truths they proclaimed. God attended his preached word with such authority that every word had majesty behind it.

These men understood their Bibles and knew they were utterly helpless in proclaiming the doctrines of grace unless the Spirit of God was mighty upon them. And what was the result of their preaching? Spurgeon shook London in his generation. Edwards opened up the realities of hell in such a dramatic fashion that the people of Enfield, Connecticut felt the heels of their shoes being warmed as he spoke as if hell itself was opening beneath them. Whitfield yielded such great power that 30,000 people would stand out in the open air in the rain to hear him preach and it was not uncommon for some of his hearers to drop dead while he preached. Nettleton spoke with such power that when it was said he was coming to a town, men feared his preaching because his preaching bowed the hearts of men like a mighty wind would bend trees. These men saw revival because they each were under the discipline of the Holy Spirit and were holy men utterly consumed with God and eternity. They lived so others might live.

But today, when we hear these stories, they seem fanciful to us. As fanciful as the king's magical sword. We just don't believe we can have access to that kind of power today, so many teach instead of preach, many entertain their hearers with funny stories and jokes and make them laugh. We just don't believe that the old paths of the old swords still work so we have fashioned ourselves new swords and we are as ineffective as a child operating a nuclear submarine. There just isn't much affect at all. Death is all around us and people are staying away from church and starting house churches because they are sick and tired of the spiritual desolation within the institutional church.

Allow me to read you our passage from Jeremiah once again for I left out the last sentence earlier. It states, "Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein." And that is the response of the church in America today. It defiantly declares, "We will not walk therein." So what is the result of the new swords in our pulpits today? We have the sword of laughter, the sword of entertainment, the sword of conformity, the sword of worldliness and death is all around us in our pulpits today. And the great tragedy is that as a nation we face utter destruction because of the sins of the land and the pulpits are powerless to do anything about it. Their new bejeweled swords just don't cut the mustard, let alone slay anyone's conscience.

If the priests of the Lord won't lay hold of God, then let the people do so. Let the Average Joe go to his knees in desperate prayer and lay hold of God that God would be pleased to send a mighty revival to his slumbering bride in the land. Let the women of the church go to their knees in holy desperation and beg God for mercy for the sins of our nation. Let the people of God turn and forsake their sins and repent and seek the face of the Almighty for his manifest presence to break out in revival once again.

The institutional Church of England in the days of Wesley and Whitfield was so dead that God had to work outside of it so he raised up Wesley and Whitfield and others to preach outdoors in the open air and begin a fresh movement of vital Christianity. If the institutional church in America will not rouse herself and throw off her grave clothes,

then perhaps God will raise up a Wesley and Whitfield for our day to go and start something outside the institutional church for God and his Kingdom.

The institutional church has become like a large ocean liner that is content to stay its course regardless of the warnings all around her. Like the Titanic, it is adrift and sinking and completely unaware of it. Because of the pride of the institutional church in America, and believing itself to be unsinkable, it will surely go down into the deepest recesses of oblivion. And as it does, a New Testament church will emerge bursting with the remnant on fire for God and alive with vital Christianity of whose members it will be said, "These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also."

The sword of the old paths lays in a scabbard of disuse. Perhaps a lad will come along and pick it up again and believe the God of the Bible, that he is able to do what he has done in former times once again.